

CBC NEWSLETTER

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CARTER ELECTED PRESIDENT

No, not Jimmy Carter of Georgia, but ROBIN CARTER of South Carolina was elected President of the Carolina Bird Club at its annual meeting held in Tryon, North Carolina, April 29, 1989.

Robin lives in Columbia, SC with his wife of 21 years, CAROLINE EASTMAN. He is a computer consultant and Caroline is an Associate Professor in the Computer Science Department at USC.

Robin received his AB from Harvard and PhD in Anthropology from Duke. A member of CBC since 1972 and currently active in Columbia Audubon Society; he has also been a member of the American Ornithological Union since 1975. Robin was serving as Vice President (SC) of CBC when elected President.

Describing his interest in birding as a "passion;" Robin has birded in all of the Lower 48 states and much of Canada. Big Days are his speciality, and he is currently on record-holding Big Day teams for South Carolina, Georgia, West Virginia, and Florida which is a record in itself. A current project is producing a bird-finding guide to South Carolina which should be completed in late 1989 or early 1990.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

My wife, Carolina Eastman, and I have just returned from a Kirtland's Warbler pilgrimage to Michigan. (Unlike our CBC South Carolina Vice President, Evelyn Dabbs, we haven't heard this species singing in our back yard yet.) Now safely back in Columbia I have been in contact with several CBC members, and have started to line up chairs for several CBC committees.

I have talked or written to many of you, and hope to contact many more



Newly elected President Robin Carter with outgoing President Sid Gauthreaux

CBC members in the upcoming weeks. Which brings me to an old saw--a truism that you have all heard, but nevertheless bears repeating. If you have an idea, a comment, a gripe about our club, please write or call me or any of the other members of the Executive Committee. Let us know what you think. Our Executive Committee wants to keep up the good work of our predecessors (and hopefully add to it), but we need your ideas and complaints to help keep us on track.

- - ROBIN CARTER - -

NO ACTION ON BYLAWS

Amendments to the Bylaws which were proposed for adoption at the Winter meeting were postponed by the Executive Committee for further study. The study committee reported at the Spring meeting that their work was not complete at that time.

REPORT OF SPRING MEETING

The lure of the mountains in the Spring and a chance to visit the Shuford Memorial Sanctuary owned by the Carolina Bird Club brought an unusually large group of 130 birders to the CBC Spring meeting. Held in Tryon, NC, April 28-30, the meeting was hosted by the Tryon Bird and Nature Club under the leadership of Martha Frederick and Simon Thompson. Special thanks are due the Reverend Fred E. Kurkowski who made the facilities of The Congregational Church (United Church of Christ) available for our meetings.

Martha Frederick enlightened us on "Mating Systems" on Friday night and Bill Duyck amazed us with his slide show of birds and scenics on Saturday. Few Spring migrants were in evidence but 134 species were seen.

THOUGHTS ON THE FINDING AND REPORTING OF RARE BIRDS

BY

MICHAEL H. TOVE

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The first part of this article appeared in the Spring issue of the Newsletter. It is concluded in this issue.)

The whole question of searching for and finding rarities is shrouded in two controversies of opposing but related nature. The first is the question of what is found where, when and by whom. In spite of qualifier terms such as "rare", "accidental", etc., the vast majority of rarities are not really unexpected. Some species are prone to wandering or records from neighboring states, etc. provide evidence that the bird would one day occur in "our" region. Consider the following two cases which I experienced while attending Utah State University.

On 8 December 1983, I gave a paper on Asiatic migrants in western North America. During that talk, I made the bold prediction that a Brambling might one day occur in Utah (based on the knowledge that they had occurred in Colorado and other neighboring states). Four days later, an adult female Brambling appeared at a feeder near campus and stayed for two weeks. Two years later, another (immature male) spent the winter frequenting several feeders.

In February of 1984, I decided that I was going to search for Utah's first Mew Gull in the large gull flocks near Salt Lake City. For a week, I called fellow birders in an effort to find companionship on the half day venture. Finally, one person from Salt Lake agreed to meet me at the dump at noon. As it turned out, I arrived five minutes early and she arrived five minutes late, and I had a Mew Gull in the scope when she reached my position some 200 yards from the car. Over the next two years, careful surveys of that dump showed Mew Gull to be regular there.

Lest you get the wrong impression, I am not trying to toot my horn as some God-like super birder. I was able to accomplish these feats with prior knowledge, careful planning and a great deal of luck. Unfortunately, many observers "try" for birds for which there is little possibility of occurring. Although such "true accidentals" do occur, the probability of an individual birder finding one is so remote that the odds on the Lottery are as appealing. Yet the unbridled desire to find such rarities (listitis) is the prime breeding ground for the worst case of Rare Bird Syndrome.

On the other side of the coin is the near categorical belief that rare birds cannot be reliably identified except in the hand. This misguided, archaic position has the potential to greatly impede field studies to the point that birding might lose its rightful place as a valuable contributory force to Ornithology. Unfortunately, this position is continually rejuvenated by the problems associated with Rare Bird Syndrome. The simple fact is that, with very rare exception, any species which is identifiable in the hand is also identifiable in the field provided that the necessary field marks are seen (and not imagined). The "trick" is to know when you have not seen enough field marks to reliably eliminate possible contenders and list it as unidentified. Here again, the temptation of Rare Bird Syndrome arises and, succumbing to its grip, we hedge and call the bird a "possible/probable". However, the most extreme manifestation is the subsequent justification that a "possible/probable" record will become validated if the species occurs in the future, or worse (bordering on lunacy), that several "possible/probables" verify each other!

Obviously, a rare bird report is strengthened by physical evidence such as a photograph or specimen. However, sight records documented as written reports CAN be trusted when: (1) The bird in question is well described (the above "Arctic Tern" was in fact, not sufficiently well described). (2) A substantial portion of the discussion is devoted to indicating why it was not something else more common, and oddly enough, why not something else equally as rare.

Ultimately, there is no way to prevent either Rare Bird Syndrome or Listitis from occurring. In fact, some Listitis, tempered with caution is good. However, the symptoms of Rare Bird Syndrome can be minimized by the use of caution and a learned willingness to "let some go". Most rarities are sufficiently obvious that they do not have to be "forced". In fact, there is a strong inverse relationship between how much "forcing" is needed and how correctly identified the bird was. Ultimately, the reporting of rare birds is not a privilege of the birding "elite". Anyone can participate and everyone who observes a bird out of place and/or season should. In the Carolinas, there are four possible vehicles now available to report significant sightings: A Field Note in Chat, American Birds Regional Reports, "Briefs for the Files" in Chat and rare bird report forms available from the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences.

BACKYARD BIRDING

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The feature "Backyard Birding" was dropped from The Chat with the writing retirement of Gail Whitehurst. If you are interested in seeing it revived in the Newsletter, please send your contributions to the Editor. A volunteer to be responsible for writing the column each issue would be even better.)

MARTHA FREDERICK of Tryon has submitted the following report on the last days in the life of a Ruby-Throated Hummingbird at the feeder over her deck last summer. We would welcome comments on what might have been wrong with this bird.

10:00 am, 7/12/88: at hummingbird feeder, a male Ruby Throated Hummingbird would take a sip of nectar and then sit still, pumping his head up and down with his bill in the air while perched on feeder. I observed him taking a sip and then pumping his head for two full minutes. He then flew to a nearby branch and continued to pump his head.

As I watched, he ruffled his feathers, preened some and before he flew (in three minutes), his whole body was "pumping or shaking." I checked the feeder after he left and saw some very moist, pink, pulpy material--apparently regurgitated. There was no color in the sugar water he had been drinking. Similar behavior was noted twice in the afternoon of the same day.

8:05 a.m. 7/13/88: Male hummingbird at feeder briefly, pumping head.

2:10 p.m. same day: Male hummingbird came to feeder, tried to feed, but dropped to deck, his head and body thumping--one wing drooped. He lay there a second or two and then flew to a nearby branch and perched. Later in the day the bird returned and drank from the feeder but engaged in the "pumping" behavior. In the evening a male bird fed briefly and seemed perfectly normal. Possibly a different bird. Later a male bird perched on edge of feeder, pumping

his head and shoulders constantly with closed bill pointed upward. I did not observe him again; although a normal acting male bird began coming three days later.

GOURDS AND BIRDS

The Gourd Village Garden Club of Cary, North Carolina is sponsoring a festival with the theme "Gourds and Birds." There will be slide shows in addition to exhibits on growing gourds for birdhouses and gourdcraft with bird motifs. The festival will be held Sept 9-10 in Jordan Hall, 1000 North Harrison Avenue, Cary, NC. Times are 10 am to 5 pm Saturday and 1-5 pm on Sunday. There is a possibility that CBC member JOSH LEE will return from Georgia to participate in the program. For details as to specific events contact Mary Ann Rood, Rt. 5, Box 210, Apex, NC 27502, (919) 362-4357.

Membership Application and Order Form

Name_____ Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____ Tel. ()_____ ()_____

(home) (business)

ENTER/RENEW MEMBERSHIP AS INDICATED

SEND MATERIALS INDICATED

☐ Individual (\$12)	☐ Life (\$200)	☐ CBC Cloth arm patch \$1.50 ea., \$1.25 ea. in quantity
☐ Family (\$15)	☐ Patron (\$50)	☐ CBC Decals (water type) 75c ea., 50c ea. in quantity
☐ Student (\$ 6)		☐ Daily Checklists 10/\$1.00, 25/\$1.25, 50/\$2.50, 75/\$3.75
☐ Affiliate Club (\$15)		100/\$5.00
☐ Library/Institution (\$15)	Make check payable to Carolina Bird Club, Inc. and mail to PO Box 27647, Raleigh, NC 27611	

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

DOROTHY BELL
Lucama, NC

BETTY KENNEDY
Six Mile, SC

EVA F. ROBINSON
Winston-Salem, NC

LEWIS & PORGE BUCK
Asheville, NC

STEVE & JANE MAHALEY
Maggie Valley, NC

RICHARD & DOROTHY SCHOCH
Hendersonville, NC

NANCY COOK & DON FAIRES
Charlotte, NC

RICHARD MURRAY
North Myrtle Beach, SC

TOBY & TERRY SCHOPBACH-
GORDON
Pinnacle, NC

DR/MRS C.L. GARRETT
Jacksonville, NC

C. J. & FRANCES NELSON
Raleigh, NC

KENNETH SCOTT
Columbia, SC

DORIS C. GOTHARD
Asheville, NC

WALLY & KAYE PETERSON
Cary, NC

NED & TEDDY SHULER
Salem, SC

TODD HASS
Mukilteo, WA

JOANNE POPE
Pisgah Forest

ELAINE KEEN
Charlotte, NC

KENNETH H. READ
Chapel Hill, NC

NEWS OF MEMBERS

EVELYN DABBS of Sumter missed the spring meeting at Tryon for a very good reason. She was giving a bird banding demonstration April 29 at Woods Bay State Park, SC.

DR. SID GAUTHRAUX of Clemson also assisted the South Carolina State Parks program by conducting a shorebird identification seminar at Huntington Beach State Park, May 19-20.

JEAN WATTLEY and her friend, Helen Richardson, both residents of the Presbyterian Home in Charleston, were featured in the "Living" section of the April 11 issue of The Evening Post.

The article told of their February cruise to Antarctica aboard the "World Discoverer." Their bird list for the trip included seven species of penguins.

PAUL CRAWFORD, 211 Shetland Way, Greer, SC 29650, is willing to give "travelogue" type slide shows for local organizations without charge. He and his wife have visited and have slide programs on Alaska, Arizona, Australia, Colorado, Florida, Manitoba, Mexico, Newfoundland, Texas, East Coast (Virginia to Maine) and the West Coast. Primary emphasis is on birds.

* * * CBC RARE BIRD ALERT * * *
(704) 332 - BIRD

DECEASED

JEANNINE ANGERMAN
Aiken, SC

EASTON L. HULME
Charlotte, NC

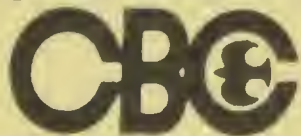
PERRY JONES
Pinehurst, NC

WILL C. STONE, III
Chester, SC

EDWIN WINKLER
Raleigh, NC

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